

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

IO-10 ACDA-05 /074 W

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R 181822Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1536

INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: STATE OF THE COALITION

REFS: (A) BONN 7359; (B) BONN 7992; (C) BONN 11306

SUMMARY: PRESS SPECULATION TO THE CONTRARY, THE SPD-FDP COALITION IN BONN IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE AND BASICALLY HEALTHY, BUT THE NOW FAMILIAR, ENDEMIC DIFFICULTIES OF SUBSTANCE, STYLE AND PERSONALITY ARE SOMEWHAT MORE EVIDENT THAN USUAL. THE CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT COALITION FRICTIONS WILL CONTINUE AND PERHAPS INTENSIFY ON OCCASION, REFLECTING THE FDP'S NEW FOUND SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ITS NEED TO SHARPEN ITS ELECTORAL PROFILE, BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION OF ANY BASIC WEAKENING IN THE COMMITMENT OF EITHER PARTY TO CONTINUATION OF THE COALITION. END SUMMARY.

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1. SPD-FDP DIFFERENCES OVER FRG FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE EC RESEARCH PROGRAM (BONN 11306) WHICH MADE HEADLINES LAST WEEK HAVE PROMPTED A NUMBER OF PRESS COMMENTARIES ON THE STATE OF THE COALITION, MOST NOTABLY THE JULY 14 SPIEGEL ARTICLE ALLEGING "DEEP SEATED DIFFERENCES" AND "A CRISIS BREWING" IN THE COALITION. FDP SECRETARY-GENERAL BANGEMANN HAS NOW HASTENED (ONE WONDERS HOW QUICKLY) TO PLACE SUCH SPECULATION IN THE CATEGORY OF "TYPICAL EXAGGERATED SUMMERTIME RUMORS", DECLARING ON JULY 15 THAT "DESPITE PRESS REPORTS OF A DETERIORATING CLIMATE" THE COALITION IS IN FACT "COMPLETELY HEALTHY -- THE FDP STANDS BESIDE THE SPD." THE TRUTH IS, HE SAID, THAT "THE FDP AND THE SPD DO HAVE DISAGREEMENTS ON CERTAIN SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES" -- BUT THAT IS THE NATURE OF A COALITION."

2. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE FDP, ENCOURAGED BY ITS RELATIVELY GOOD SHOWING IN RECENT ELECTIONS, HAS BEEN DIGGING IN ITS HEELS ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES, PARTICULARLY MITBESTIMMUNG, BODENRECHT, AND EC QUESTIONS, AND IT IS ALSO NO SECRET THAT THE FDP CONTINUES TO BE LESS THAN ENCHANTED BY SCHMIDT'S RATHER HIGH-HANDED AND BRUSQUE STYLE. IRONICALLY, IT IS THE FDP'S MAIHOFFER, THE FDP'S LEADING LONG TIME ENTHUSIAST OF COALITION WITH THE SPD, WHO SEEMS TO BE MOST SENSITIVE TO SCHMIDT'S SLIGHTS -- A SITUATION WHICH THE FDP IS OBVIOUSLY PLAYING UP AS A WARNING TO THE SPD (BUT WHICH THE SPD, BY THE SAME TOKEN, POINTS TO AS EVIDENCE THAT SPD-FDP DIFFERENCES ARE NOT REALLY SERIOUS ENOUGH TO THREATEN THE COALITION.) GENSCHER IS ALSO CONTINUALLY BEING UPSTAGED, MOST RECENTLY BY BRANDT, WHOSE TRIP TO THE USSR INSPIRED SEVERAL CARTOONS SHOWING THE FRG'S "THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS" (SCHMIDT, BRANDT, AND GENSCHER) WITH GENSCHER INVARIABLY IN THE WINGS. HOWEVER, GENSCHER'S STANDING WITHIN THE FDP AND HIS

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SELF-CONFIDENCE AS FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE INCREASED APPRECIABLY IN RECENT MONTHS, AND THE FDP'S RECENT ASSERTIVENESS ON EC POLICY QUESTIONS IS PROBABLY IN PART A REFLECTION OF THIS.

3. ALTHOUGH THE FDP HAS NOW DONE ITS PART TO "DE-DRAMATIZE" ITS DIFFERENCES WITH THE SPD, AND THE SPD REPORTEDLY HAS INSTRUCTIONS FROM ITS LEADERSHIP TO "BE KIND TO THE FDP", THE PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE AND PERSONALITY SEEM TO HAVE INTENSIFIED SOMEWHAT AND ARE CERTAINLY TALKED ABOUT MORE OPENLY THAN WAS THE CASE A FEW MONTHS AGO. SOME OF THIS IS THE PRODUCT OF A PRESS FACED WITH NOTHING MUCH ELSE TO REPORT ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE IN THE SUMMER MONTHS. HOWEVER, MUCH OF IT IS A GENUINE REFLECTION OF THE FDP'S NEW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOUND SELF-CONFIDENCE COUPLED WITH ITS NEED TO PROFILE ITSELF EVEN MORE CLEARLY IN THE EYES OF THE VOTERS. INDICATIONS THAT THE BUSINESS OF COALITION GOVERNMENT IS BECOMING SOMEWHAT MORE DIFFICULT IS BEST ILLUSTRATED IN THE CASE OF MITBESTIMMUNG, AN ISSUE ON WHICH FDP DEMANDS GIVE THE SPD REAL PROBLEMS WITH THE TRADE UNIONS. WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, HOWEVER, THE BASIC POLITICAL WILL TO FIND THE COMPROMISES NECESSARY TO KEEP THE COALITION GOING UNTIL 1976 STILL REMAINS ON THE PART OF BOTH THE SPD AND THE FDP.
HILLENBRAND

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